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STATE FOR NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2010
TAGS: [MO](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#)
SUBJECT: SHEIKH QARADAWI VISITS MOROCCO

Classified By: A/Polcouns Ian McCary for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Sheikh Youssef Qaradawi, the popular Egyptian cleric, visited Morocco in late August. A guest of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Sheikh addressed several large gatherings of Moroccan youth, lambasting the U.S. and Israel and calling for a boycott of American products. The Sheikh's boycott calls were repeated in an editorial in the PJD's Arabic daily, which named several prominent U.S. firms that allegedly gave 12 percent of their profits to Israel. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Sheikh Youssef Qaradawi, the Egyptian-born cleric best known in the Arab World for his weekly religious affairs show on Al-Jazeera TV, and perhaps best known in the West for his fatwas sanctioning the killing of American soldiers in Iraq, and acts of terror against Israelis, visited Morocco in the last week of August. Qaradawi came at the invitation of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) which won 42 of 325 seats in the Moroccan parliament in the 2002 elections and is expected to make a strong showing in the late 2007 parliamentary polls. Qaradawi addressed crowds at PJD-organized events in Tangiers on August 26 and Meknes on August 28.

¶3. (C) Qaradawi's talk in Tangiers was attended by at least 3000 Moroccans - mainly young adults. POL FSN, visiting Tangiers August 26, was unable to get inside the auditorium, which was filled beyond capacity. GOM security at the event appeared low-key and relaxed. In Meknes, on August 28, the Sheikh addressed members of the PJD's youth wing. As relayed in the PJD's Arabic daily &Al-Tajdid, the Sheikh used his talk in Meknes to lambaste the U.S. and Israel and call for a boycott of U.S. products.

¶4. (SBU) &For the sake of Palestine and Lebanon, boycott American products, Qaradawi urged his audience. &The Bush administration, which has rushed to send laser-guided bombs to Israel, has been blocking international efforts to press for an immediate cease-fire...If we can't go and fight alongside our brothers in Lebanon and Palestine, let's support them with money and deal a blow to the economies of their enemies, the paper quoted him as saying, adding that he cited the &successful Muslim boycott of Danish products in the wake of the early 2006 cartoon scandal.

¶5. (SBU) Al-Tajdid picked up and expanded on Qaradawi's boycott theme in its August 31 edition, with a front page editorial alleging that Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Pepsi, and Marlboro are sending 12 percent of their profits to Israel. The piece further alleged that the President of Starbucks Coffee had publicly vowed to double his company's donations to Israel so that it could &kill those animals in Lebanon. The editorial lamented that other big U.S. firms, such as

Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken, remain popular with Moroccan consumers in spite of U.S. support for Israel and urged Arab and Muslim readers to start boycotting all U.S. products now.

¶6. (C) Comment: Qaradawi,s warm reception by the PJD and Islamist youth reflect the resonance that his brand of Islam, and emotional reactions to violence in Lebanon and Palestine, are finding in parts of Moroccan society. At the same time, public awareness of his visit is limited) it was pointedly not covered on State TV or in the pro-government press. Calls to boycott U.S. products are not new here. It is too early to say whether this latest round will have any measurable impact. End comment.

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